

DHHS News

Dedicated to Maine People Living Safe, Healthy, and Productive Lives

February, 2006

Welcome

Welcome to the first edition of **DHHS News**. Here is a newsletter that we hope will provide you with useful, timely news and information on a variety of subjects. As time goes by, it is our hope that this newsletter will help create a greater sense of community within the Department.

Together, we do more good work than anyone realizes. Here is another medium for celebrating our successes and learning more about the work we do on behalf of the people of Maine.

Thanks to the support of Acting Commissioner Brenda Harvey, our first issue is a collaborative effort shared by several staff in the Commissioner's office. We intend to publish a useful newsletter that remains vital, accurate, and worthwhile from issue to issue.

From within the pages of **DHHS News**, we will report on a wide range of subjects; your ideas and suggestions for articles or regular columns are welcome. We want this newsletter to be useful to you. Consider this your newsletter; it belongs to everyone at DHHS.

Please forward your ideas and suggestions to peggie.l.dore@maine.gov.

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“If you can feel good about yourself, you’ll make your customers feel good.”

Lynn Brown (page 5)

Message from Acting Commissioner Brenda Harvey

Welcome to our first DHHS newsletter. In my time as Acting Commissioner I am placing a high priority on communication, both externally with our stakeholders and internally, with staff, provider partners, and contractors. A Communications Team, coordinated by Nancy Desisto, has been created in my office. As members of that team, Cheryl Ring is charged with formulating an internal communication strategy and Lynn (Kip) Kippax will continue managing external communications.

In addition to the newsletter, another component of this communication strategy is to meet monthly with DHHS regional-managers in order to define and support their strategic role, build capacity, and work together to address policy and practice issues.

I am committed to preserving the organizational alignment proposed by former Commissioner Nicholas. At the 1/31/06 meeting of regional-managers, four high-priority themes were identified:



Brenda M. Harvey

First, to assure a safe and trusting environment exists at DHHS that encourages staff to think and act creatively in order to move closer toward the vision of supporting *Maine people to live safe, healthy, and productive lives*. As we create the new department, our culture must allow and encourage staff to problem solve together.

Second is the need to focus on outcome measures. The new governing principles include five department-wide outcome measures (high-performing staff, excellent provider partnerships; integrated services; superior customer service; and efficient and effective administration). I am

very impressed with how often staff focus on accountability and the need to measure performance against outcomes. Adopting these themes results in linking program objectives and staff performance indicators with the DHHS vision and mission.

Third, is the need to enhance opportunities for stakeholder involvement. By reaching out to stakeholders to participate in a meaningful way, we will achieve our common mission of "assisting people".

Finally, our new department must be strengths based. Other public service agencies have identified this as key to building a strong workforce and, in turn, a high performing organization.

We all have the capacity to expand our leadership role in the department. Operating as one team toward realizing a mission and vision can bring us closer to achieving this goal. We all have the capacity to expand our leadership role in the department and I want to see us work as one team operating in concert toward our vision and mission.

Bridge Closure Next Month in Augusta

For those employees who travel to and from work in the Capitol Area or those coming to August for meetings, traffic patterns are going to be changing soon as the Augusta Memorial Bridge undergoes reconstruction. The bridge closure will mean many staff need to find alternate routes to their destinations. Plan ahead by plotting a new course, and start practicing it now to get into the habit and not let the February 26th bridge closure disrupt your commute time. More information can be found on the Maine State Intranet at [State of Maine Intranet - News - Augusta Memorial Bridge closing is fast approaching!](#)

DHHS Governing Principles

Vision

Maine people live safe, healthy, and productive lives

Mission

Provide integrated health and human services to the people of Maine to assist individuals in meeting their needs, while respecting the rights and preferences of the individual and family, within available resources.

Foundational Values

Honesty, Respect, Integrity, Responsibility, Accountability, Compassion, Empathy, Fairness

Guiding Principles

- Treat consumers with dignity and respect
- Deliver services that are individualized, family-centered, easily accessible, preventative, independence-oriented, interdisciplinary, collaborative, evidence-based and consistent with best and promising practices.
- Value and support departmental staff as a critical connection to the consumer.
- Engage staff, stakeholders, providers and customers in a collaborative partnership that continuously seeks excellence in service design and delivery.
 - Balance centralized accountability with regional flexibility.
 - Align systems, actions, and values toward a common vision.

Department Goals

1. Protect and enhance the health and well-being of Maine people
2. Promote independence and self sufficiency
3. Protect and care for those who are unable to care for themselves
4. Provide effective stewardship for the resources entrusted to the department

Department Outcomes

- High Performing Staff
- Excellent Provider Partnerships
- Integrated Services
- Superior Customer Service
- Efficient and Effective Administration

Program Objectives

**Program Performance
Indicators**

**Staff Performance
Expectations**

Lynne Brown – A Profile

“They Count on Me”

By Cheryl Ring

Lynn Brown has been a Personnel & Payroll Technician at DHHS for 19 years. Her supervisor notes that “Lynn has a good customer services reputation”. I recently experienced the quality of Lynn’s customer service in a series of e-mails:

Tue 1/24/2006 10:23 AM: **Cheryl:** “Hi, Lynn - Can you advise as to how I would change the amounts being directly deposited into my bank account?...”

Tue 1/24/2006 10:30 AM: **Lynn:** “Just let me know what you’d like to do.”

Tue 1/24/2006 10:53 AM: **Cheryl:** “Please double the amount deposited into one account, concomitantly reduce the amount deposited into a second account and keep the amount deposited into a third account the same.”

Tue 1/24/2006 11:19 AM: **Lynn:** “Amounts changed effective 1/24/2006. Have a fine day.”

Tue 1/24/2006 11:20 AM: **Cheryl:** “Many thanks...”

Tue 1/24/2006 11:22 AM: **Lynn:** “Never a problem.”

My reaction to this interaction? “Wow – fast, accurate, responsive – and friendly! I feel like I’m her only customer.” In fact, I discovered that Lynn provides payroll and personnel services to 420 employees, at offices in Augusta, Skowhegan, and Rockland. I asked Lynn to talk more about her work and her approach to customer service:

“I think of my customers as “my people” and I like them to call me directly if they have a question, because often it’s important and time-sensitive. It probably takes a bit more time, but I want to be sure that my people get the right information as fast as possible, so they can continue to do their jobs, knowing that I can get their payroll or personnel details taken care of – that’s what I’m here for. I stay organized so that I can respond to e-mails or voicemails right away. Or, if I’m doing payroll and can’t get to the answer right away, I let them know and ask them if I can respond as soon as I’m able to.

“I try to never come in in a bad mood, since I don’t think I have that right to impose my negative feelings on anybody. Some days I may not have as big a smile in my voice as other days, but I still want to be as ready as I can be to help people when they call me.

“I like my job because of my people – I love my people. This is how I contribute to the vision of the Department (*Maine people living safe, healthy, and productive lives*). I know

that I’m going to be able to help them out, and they are then going to be able to continue to go out and serve their clients - they count on me for the business end of their employment here at DHHS.

“I was a single parent when I moved to Maine years ago, when my son was 4 months old. I started in State government through the ASPIRE program. The then-Bureau of Family Independence (now Office of Integrated Access & Support) set me up with the receptionist’s job here at DHHS, which I loved. Within a year, though, I was handling the personnel records of people in the ASPIRE program!

They really helped me at that time.

“My son (who now has a degree in animal/veterinary science) and I live on a 350 acre farm in China, in what used to be the “hired hands” house (our kitchen was the blacksmith shop!) We take care of our Golden Retriever, chocolate lab puppy, a half-dozen horses we board, and Hereford and Angus cows. My parents live in the main house across the way.

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“People talk customer service, Lynn does customer service. In the two years I’ve worked with her she always recognizes that any personnel issue, large or small, impacts on a person. She looks beyond the form, or the line number, or mistake I or someone else has made with the process, and looks at what she can do to help the affected person. Lynn does not do this because it is her charge, she does it because she cares about people.”

Michael Frey, DHHS Program Administrator

Computer Tips to Help You

People don't always realize that anything that can be done on the computer with the mouse can be done more easily and quicker by using a keyboard command. There are literally hundreds of keyboard commands to choose from.

One of the more useful is the "Alt +Tab" command. A user can be working in multiple programs at once, and flow from one program to another, not by squinting at the small button captions at the bottom of the screen and trying to click them with a mouse, but by simply holding the "Alt" key down with thumb, and tapping the "tab" key with index finger – also, in some circles, known as "alt-tabbing".

Try it, by opening several programs at once, (e.g. your inbox and calendar from Outlook, Word, Excel, and maine.gov), hold the Alt key down with your left thumb and tap the "tab" key with your index finger. A box will automatically open in the center of the screen, showing the icons of all your open programs, highlighting one after the other with each tap of the Tab key. When you get to the one you want, simply let go, and voila, you have the program that you want open before you. (Pressing Shift-Alt-Tab cycles the other way, in case you missed the application you wanted).

Other very useful keyboard commands: Wherever your cursor is blinking, you can perform the following actions with the keyboard, by holding down the CTRL key, and tapping the indicated letter –(much faster than trying to perform the

function with either the mouse or by hunting for the right icon to click.)

Formatting	Hold Down....:	...and Tap:
Make letters italic.	CTRL	I
Underline words	CTRL	U
Make words bold	CTRL	B
Decrease font size.	CTRL+SHIFT	<
Increase font size.	CTRL+SHIFT	>
Copy the <i>selected</i> text or object. (user <i>selects</i> text by double-clicking it first, then using CTRL+C keyboard shortcut))	CTRL	C
Cut the <i>selected</i> text or object. (user <i>selects</i> text by double-clicking it, then using CTRL+X keyboard shortcut)	CTRL	X
Paste text. (user clicks once where copied or cut text is to appear, then CTRL-V's)	CTRL	V
Undo the last action. (good to correct mistakes!)	CTRL	Z
Redo the last action.	CTRL	Y

Many other keyboard commands are available at "Help" in the menu bar, then click "Microsoft Office Word Help" and typing "keyboard shortcuts" in the "search for" box. You'll see dozens more there, arranged by function.

Commissioner Search

The question on many people's mind as they look at the DHHS organization currently is when will we have a permanent Commissioner?

Governor Baldacci has tasked several key executives to form a search committee to identify qualified, interested candidates and recommend them to the Governor for consideration. The plan is to have a permanent Commissioner in place before summer.

Candidates for the role of Departmental Commissioner in Maine State Government are required to make a presentation to the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, the Legislative Committee of Jurisdiction for the Department of Health and Human Services, prior to a full vote of confirmation in both bodies of the Maine State Legislature. Following the confirmation vote, the new Commissioner is sworn in by the Governor and / or Secretary of State, and is ready to take office.

Show ME the Money!

Some quick thinking and a little detective work put thousands of dollars into the hands of deserving parents with children in Maine.

Months ago now, two sharp eyed employees of the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) heard about a class-action lawsuit in York County. They had a hunch.

Named in the suit, as plaintiffs, were thousands of former York County Jail prisoners who believed they were illegally strip searched between 1996 and 2004. When all was said and done, the court awarded the 7,500 plaintiffs \$3.3 million.

The Department of Health and Human Services investigated and discovered that indeed some of the plaintiffs owed unpaid child support. The Department worked in cooperation with the Attorney General and the U.S. District Court, in Portland, to place liens on those monies awarded to plaintiffs who owed child support.

What started as a hunch by two DHHS employees paid off.

In the end, \$463-thousand was collected from individuals awarded damages as a result of the class action suit. Of that sum, \$240-thousand was turned over to families. The remainder went to state and federal government to help repay the cost of public assistance during the time that child support payments were not available.

"When the court authorizes us to collect child support, we do anything we can to meet that obligation. It's the children and the taxpayers we're thinking of," said Steve Hussey, Director Division of Support Enforcement and Recovery (DSER) in the Office of Integrated Access and Support.

In the department's list of potential debtors, 284 people – all named in the class action suit – owed back child support. In fact, 120 of those named had not made a child support payment in over a year.

Until this investigation began, 30 deserving families had never received any of the child support payments due to them. A total of 20 cases were paid in full.

"The Office of Attorney General was very responsive when these legal issues arose," said Brenda Harvey, Acting Commissioner of the Department of Health and Human Services.

"Many DHHS employees made this a successful effort, but I want to thank DSER Regional Manager John Lévesque and District Supervisor Gordon Paul, Biddeford District Office. They took the lead in this case.

"Our job is to protect and enhance the health and well-being of Maine citizens. It is efforts like this one that make me proud to be part of the Department and everyone who works within it, Harvey said."

Last year, the Department collected \$110-million in child support payments, with \$80-million going directly to families.

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Lynn Brown - continued from page 5

"The farm is what allows me to come in and do my job. I love the animals, the land, the hay, walking in the woods.

"I really like the foundational values of DHHS – I think that if we can hone in on them, then that will certainly achieve our mission. If we have employees that are working on those values, then the mission will come automatically. If you can feel good about yourself, you'll make your customers feel good. Our people are good, and trying to do a good job. It's always gotten my back up a bit when people look down on state workers. If they really knew what we did every day, they'd feel that their taxes were going to good use! That's what we're here for, to take care of our fellow man, both in our public and our personal life.

5 Common Headache Triggers

Headache sufferers spend more than \$4 billion a year on over-the-counter pain relievers. But prevention costs you nothing. Here are five leading headache culprits to watch out for:

Frayed nerves are a frequent cause of stress headaches and may also trigger migraines. Ideas: Take 30 minutes a day just to daydream, meditate, or otherwise relax. Certain foods containing **substances** that can trigger headache pain. Examples: caffeine, red wine, processed meats, chocolate, cheese, citrus fruits, lentils, snow peas and monosodium glutamate (MSG).

Concentrating on one object for a long time (such as a computer screen) can cause **eyestrain**, leading to temporary head pain. Suggestions: Take occasional “eye breaks” by looking out a window...consider an eye exam to see if a vision problem may be a factor. **Staying seated** for long periods, especially if you’re constantly on the phone or hunched over, can tighten muscles and lead to tension headaches. Self-defense: Shift position – stretch once an hour – stand during phone calls – take a lunchtime walk. And have an ergonomics assessment of your workstation to be sure your furniture, computer equipment and phone and accessories are arranged in an ergonomically correct layout. DHHS employees can contact rebecca.s.green@maine.gov to arrange for a workstation evaluation by a trained assessment technician at your location.

Too little, or, surprisingly, even too much **sleep** can bring on headaches. Best: Control your brain’s “clock” by going to bed and getting up at the same time each day, even on weekends!

Dollars – and CHANGE!

Before DHS and BDS merged, the two Departments were paid on opposite bi-weekly pay schedules. As you’ve learned in a recent e-mail, beginning on March 29th, all employees who are currently on “Cycle B” (anyone who was paid on 1/25 or are newly hired with a scheduled pay date of February 8th or 22nd) will be converting to “Cycle A”.

At the 1/31/06 Regional-Managers’ Meeting, Deputy Commissioner Geoff Green said that, “No employee will lose anything as a result of the payroll change – the change won’t affect staff economically.”

There are several reasons for converting all DHHS employees over onto one pay day, including the following example. As we co-locate employees and combine staff from each legacy Department’s various divisions, some former DHHS employees now report to supervisors who were former BDS employees, and vice-versa. Our TAMS systems as they are currently set up do not allow for a former BDS supervisor to sign off on a former DHHS employee’s TAMS, and vice versa. The conversion will clear up this discrepancy, as well as streamline payroll functions and help identify other efficiencies.

Here is how the conversion will play out for Cycle B employees: Weeks ending March 4 and March 11 must be entered into TAMS no later than March 15 and will be paid March 22nd.

Week ending March 18 must be entered into TAMS no earlier than March 20th and no later than noon on March 21 and will be paid March 29th.

Weeks ending March 25 and April 1 may be entered into TAMS from March 27th through April 3rd and will be paid April 12th. After which time, we’ll all be on the same pay schedule!

For those staff banking with the Maine State Credit Union, loan payments and other direct deposit transactions may be affected. The Credit Union has agreed to advance loan payment dates to April 12 for Cycle B employees without assessing any late fees. I encourage you to contact the Credit Union or your bank to discuss the change in your payroll dates. All deductions from your March 29th paycheck will be automatically reduced by 50%. Additionally, staff have an option to make a one time deduction change form, to modify the amounts of various deductions including deferred comp, MSECCA, savings bonds, financial institutions, or other Credit Union deductions. The form to complete this transaction can be provided by your payroll technician and must be completed and submitted to DHHS Human Resources no later than March 10th. Contact your individual payroll technician to explore this option (Lynn Brown, 287-1872; Judy Raymond, 287-8543; Linda Parker, 287-1874; Susan Williams 287-1875; Ranae Bliss, 287-8542).

There will be reminders of these changes and deadlines on your TAMS timesheet each week. Be sure to be informed and plan ahead in order to avoid as much inconvenience as possible!